

**REMARKS**

The applicants respectfully request reconsideration in view of the amendment and the following remarks. Support for newly added claim 21 can be found in the original claims. Support for newly added claims 23-24 can be found in the specification at page 4, lines 23-27.

Claims 1 and 8-20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Sansone et al. WO 98/14505 ("Sansone"). The applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Sansone discloses a method for producing a porous membrane containing polybenzimidazole ("PBI") and subsequent filling of the porous membrane with phosphoric acid (see the abstract)

The porous membrane is obtained through a coagulation bath. (See Sansone at page 3, line 26 "microporous", line 32 "coagulation bath", page 4 lines 5-19). The applicants' claimed process does not relate to porous membranes. The applicants' membranes are formed comprising the step of: immersing a basic polymer in a strong acid having a concentration sufficient to impregnate the basic polymer. The applicants' membranes are formed by a solvent casting process as described on page 4, lines 32 to page 5, line 11 of the instant specification and therefore are not porous. The applicants' polymer films have a dense, uniform, non porous surface (by evaporating the casting solvent).

The wetting of such a surface is totally different from porous surfaces. Hence, the pores are being filled only in Sansone. Embedding / Impregnating of dense, uniform, non-porous surface polymer films typically require different methods than porous films. Hence the applicants' starting material is different from the material being disclosed by Sansone. For the above reasons this rejection should be withdrawn.

In view of the above, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to pass this application to issue.

A two month extension fee has been paid. Applicant believes no fee is due with this response. However, if a fee is due, please charge our Deposit Account No. 03-2775, under Order No. 08577-00033-US from which the undersigned is authorized to draw.

Respectfully submitted,

By

Ashley I. Pezzner

Registration No.: 35,646

CONNOLLY BOVE LODGE & HUTZ LLP

1007 North Orange Street

P.O. Box 2207

Wilmington, Delaware 19899

(302) 658-9141

(302) 658-5614 (Fax)

Attorney for Applicant